Thank you. As we were reminded by Sergeant Norman Daymirringu and his digeridoo a little while ago, we are gathered today here and around Australia on Aboriginal land.

Here in Canberra on the land of the Ngunawal people. We acknowledge their elders past and present as we do around Australia.

And especially today we acknowledge the service and the sacrifice of the first Australians who served our nation in our defence forces as Sergeant Daymirringu is serving us today.

We are joined here today by Mr Kerry Stokes, the Chairman of the Council of the Australian War Memorial and his wife Christine. Dr Brendan Nelson, the Director of the War Memorial and Gillian Adamson his wife. Vice Admiral Griggs, the Chief of the Defence Force. We are joined by His Excellency Charles Lepani, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corp and the High Commissioners of New Zealand and the United Kingdom and the Ambassador from Turkey.

We are joined by my Parliamentary colleagues, Senator Parry, the President of the Senate and the Honourable Bruce Scott, representing the Speaker. We are joined by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bill Shorten and his wife Chloe and also by Rear Admiral Ken Doolan, the National President of the RSL and Mr Andrew Barr, the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory.

Thank you all, all of you for being here today. Thank you above all our service men and women serving today and serving in years past - you have kept us safe.

One hundred years ago today, Australians at home and abroad - along the far flung battleline gathered for the first time to remember the landing at Anzac Cove on the 25th of April 1915.

At their training camps outside Cairo, diggers stood in reverent silence as they recalled the disastrous Gallipoli campaign of the year before. They had lost friends, brothers; brothers in arms.
And so they reflected on the carnage and the loss and on the heroism and the triumph of the Digger’s spirit in the midst of the blunders of command.

Many of them had been evacuated from Gallipoli only months before.

They knew that more terrible challenges awaited them.

Within weeks, they would sail for France.

Having experienced the horror of trench warfare on the ridges above Anzac Cove, they were now to confront on an even more gruesomely industrial scale the savagely unequal contest between man and machine gun.

This was the hellfire that awaited the Anzacs in their first military offensive in Europe, the battle of Fromelles.

On that night of July 19, 1916, more than five-and-a-half thousand Australians died, were wounded or were missing.

Like Gallipoli before it, the attack on the Germans’ position was poorly conceived.

No wonder the Australian lions felt that they were being led by Imperial donkeys.

Great victories - decisive and Australian led - were to come. But they must have seemed far off in the mud and blood of Fromelles.

Military historian Ross McMullin called it ‘the worst 24 hours in Australia’s entire history.’

Jimmy Downing was one of the survivors. He captured the apocalyptic nightmare: “Stammering scores of German machine guns spluttered violently... it was the charge of the Light Brigade once more - but more terrible, more hopeless.”

On this Anzac Day, we commemorate the landing at Anzac Cove, 101 years ago, the beginning of the Gallipoli campaign.

Shocking as the losses of the Anzacs and their British and French comrades were, we remember too the immense sacrifice of the Turkish people, defending their country.

In the years to come their leader Mustafa Kemal Ataturk would comfort the mothers of Australia for the loss of their ‘Johnnies’ just as the mothers of Turkey grieved the loss of their ‘Mehmets’.

Three new nations – Australia, New Zealand and Turkey - count Gallipoli as a momentous chapter in their foundation story.

And today we offer our solidarity to the Turkish people as we and our allies battle together a new war against terrorism. A new war fought both abroad and at home and in every dimension in the battle space and the cyberspace.

Yet as we continue the Centenary of Anzac—this commemoration of Australia’s service in the First World War—it’s time to reflect on the impact on our nation of the extraordinary sacrifice at Fromelles and the other battlegrounds of the Western Front.
The Western Front - a place of courage, suffering and loss where heroism was to be found in abundance - wisdom in leadership harder to find.

Of the more than 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War, more than 60,000 were killed—more than 45,000 of them on the Western Front.

Ours was a nation in arms – there were only five million of us - almost every family served.

Lucy’s grandfather Geoffrey Hughes was a fighter ace in the Royal Flying Corps with eleven victories and a Military Cross.

In December 1916, he learned that his brother Roger, a doctor, recently arrived on the Front, had been wounded. He rushed to his side and was with him when he died.

My grandfather Fred Turnbull was an infantryman on the Western Front - a private.

We talked about many things Fred and I - fishing and carpentry, politics and poetry - but he never talked to me about the trenches.

A lot of his generation were like that.

Fred was gassed but survived, as Geoffrey did, to serve again in the Second World War - the one that started 21 years after the end of the war to end all wars.

The calculus of progress on the Western Front was a brutal one metres gained for thousands of lives lost.

At the Battle of the Somme alone more than one million allied and enemy troops were killed or wounded.

And at Pozières, Australian troops suffered 23,000 casualties in less than seven weeks, of whom 6,800 were killed.

Australia’s official war historian Charles Bean wrote, “On that crowded mile of summit marks a ridge more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth.”

The Australian soldiers’ unyielding courage - their stubborn refusal to give ground - won them the enduring gratitude of the people of France.

Those back home who waited for news of their boys fighting in the war in France were overwhelmed by the loss of life.

Mothers lost sons - sometimes all of them. It must have seemed a generation was widowed and fatherless.

Australia’s loss of over 60,000 dead is a staggering toll, even today. But we were a nation of five million. It would be like our nation losing 300,000 lives in a war today.

Australia was a nation in shock, in deep mourning, but still resolved to keep fighting until the war was won and so it was.
And so it was 100 years ago, that one of our great national institutions, the Returned and Services League, came into existence. An institution epitomising the values of mateship, solidarity and enduring respect for those who’ve served or are serving in our nation’s cause.

We became a nation that does not glorify war - this day does not commemorate a triumph of arms. It commemorates the triumph of the human spirit, the courage and resolve of those men and women who 100 years ago and ever since and today put their lives on the line to keep us safe, free and defend the interests of Australia and the values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law which we share and for which we stand.

Throughout history and in every theatre, the Anzac spirit inspires us to be our better selves.

Yesterday I was with Garry Robinson - a Special Forces Sergeant who was shockingly injured in a helicopter crash in 2010 in Afghanistan.

Three of his mates were killed.

Garry has overcome his terrible injuries, inspired by the sacrifice of his mates and the love of his wife Katrina and their children. He’s back doing what he loves competing as an athlete. Next stop the Invictus Games in Orlando.

His resilience, his courage, his determination to be truly Invictus, truly unconquered, is an example, a role model for us all.

I saw that spirit in January in the men and women of the ADF serving in the Middle East.

In Kabul, working with our allies as we have done for fifteen years to make a stronger, more secure Afghanistan because a more secure Afghanistan enhances both regional and global security.

Our commitment to Afghanistan has been the longest in our military history.

More than 25,000 Australians have served there since 2001. Forty one Australians have died on active service and more than 260 have been wounded.

Our forces in Iraq and the Gulf have been the second largest allied military commitment in the war against the terrorists Da’esh.

The war against terrorism is fought in every dimension, as I noted earlier but the single most important priority is to defeat Da’esh in the field in Syria and Iraq.

We are so proud of the exceptional men and women who are working tirelessly and professionally to train and build the capacity of the Iraq Security Forces.

With around 300 Australians and 100 New Zealanders, Task Group Taji represents yet another significant collaboration between our countries since Gallipoli.

Our special forces have played a critically important role in assisting the Iraq Government as it begins to roll back the gains made by Da’esh.

Our Air Force are striking Da’esh strongholds in Iraq and Syria and at sea our Navy is stopping the smuggling, drug running and piracy that fuels these terrorist organisations.
We remember and we thank today’s Anzacs for their service in the Middle East and around the world in Australia’s name and in freedom’s cause.

We also acknowledge the dedicated and highly skilled ADF members working hard to protect our national interests here at home.

No matter where they are, they carry out their missions with professionalism, discipline and integrity.

Their service honours the Anzac tradition everyday.

Their responsibilities weigh heavily on their shoulders but they don’t just carry physical risks. It’s important we recognise the psychological scars many veterans carry - they need our ongoing support.

And of course while we commemorate our service men and women - we should also acknowledge the sacrifice their families make while their loved ones are defending our ideals.

This morning at North Bondi at the Dawn Service, Captain Paul O’Grady of the Royal Australian Navy spoke movingly of the sacrifice and support of ADF families. They serve Australia just as their husbands and wives, fathers and mothers do.

We honour the Diggers of a century ago in many ways but there is no better way than in supporting and caring for today’s Diggers, today’s veterans and their families.

The memorials we have built and the symbols we have adopted to commemorate our role in war—not as conquerors but as defenders of liberty—speak volumes about our great country.

We do not boast of our victories, because we know that they came at a great cost to us and to others.

We do not parade missiles and tanks in an ostentatious display of might; we choose to stand as one in a moment of silent contemplation in tribute to those who fought and died so that we could live in freedom.

We respect but we do not hero worship our military leaders; instead, we repay our respects here at the tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier who died on the Western Front and represents the sacrifice of all of those who die in war.

And today at this solemn and peaceful place of reflection, our national memorial, the honour roll will become a scarlet sea of poppies because, above all, we choose a symbol of hope on this day that could be a reminder of despair.

Too much Australian blood was shed on the Western Front but from Flanders Field rose a poppy—a delicate flower that pushed through the torn and trampled earth to become a symbol of optimism and renewal.

This Anzac Day, we thank the men and women who serve and have served. Those who have brought and who bring hope in times of despair.

Those whose names we may not know but whose courage and sacrifice we will honour forever.
We will remember them.

Lest We Forget.